



PROJECT MEMO

TO:	Wes McCart	DATE:	June 29, 2026
FROM:	MillieAnne VanDevender & Nicole Stickney Tri-Cities - (509) 380-5883	PROJECT NO.:	2240941.31
		PROJECT NAME:	Franklin County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update
SUBJECT:	Plan Drafts: Introduction Chapter, Historical and Cultural Resources Element, and Natural Environment Element		

The AHBL consultant team has worked with staff to draft updates to the 2018-2038 Franklin County Comprehensive Plan. This memo provides a summary of proposed revisions that would apply throughout the Plan, together with an overview of proposed changes to the Introduction chapter, the Historical and Cultural Resources Element, and the Natural Environment Element. The proposed changes are based on updated data, community feedback, requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) which apply to Franklin County, and guidance from the Department of Commerce.

We suggest that you include this memo with the initial draft in the Planning Commission's packet for their review as a read-ahead item (staff report) for the meeting scheduled for July 7, 2026. Further, we recommend the Planning Commission members read and review the "Introduction" chapter first because it provides background information on the Comprehensive Plan and the process to update it, which we would normally include in a staff report but are omitting from here for brevity.

GENERAL CHANGES THROUGHOUT THE INTRODUCTION CHAPTER AND ALL ELEMENTS

We prepared the drafts with the following revisions:

- Improved grammar and word use to improve readability.
- Updated outdated information.
- Updated links to online resources.
- Replaced previous maps with updated maps, where newer maps and information were publicly available online.
- Reconfigured Elements to provide the **goals and policies** in one volume and the **discussion and analyses** in a second volume. This organization is intended to meet staff's objective to provide the policy language up front and not co-mingled with the other data and information sets. Notably, no executive summary or other narrative is included with the goals and policies which would be redundant; for each element "Volume A" will contain a listing of the Goals and Policies whereas "Volume B" will provide the supporting and related information. This is an exceptionally streamlined approach.
- Proposed rewrite of all goals and many of the policies, per your department's review and direction after reviewing our first drafts which provided an initial assessment and analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan sets the stage for the goals, policies, and information provided within the Plan. Volume A of the Introduction includes the County-Wide Planning Policies which serve as the overarching and general policies for Franklin County and the cities within the county.

Volume B of the Introduction includes important background information about the Growth Management Act and its requirements and the following contextual information:

- Franklin County's Location
- Legal Framework and the Plan's Purpose
- A brief history of long-range planning in Franklin County
- Summaries of the Elements contained within the Plan
- The Franklin County Vision Statement
- Plan Implementation strategies

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Franklin County Comprehensive Plan has addressed historical and cultural resources in the past, despite not being a requirement of the GMA.

Volume A of the Historical and Cultural Resources Element includes consolidated goals and policies pertaining to the properties of potential or known historic and cultural significance in Franklin County.

Volume B of the Historical and Cultural Resources Element includes information about the history of Native American tribes in Franklin County and information about the designation of historic properties.

New Requirements

Per WAC 365-196-450, a separate historic preservation element is not required. However, counties must be guided by the historic preservation goal in their comprehensive plan. Therefore, there are no new requirements specific to the Historical and Cultural Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Proposed Changes

We prepared the drafts with the following revisions:

Selected Inventory

- Drafted updates to the tables included in the Element: *the National Register of Historic Places Sites in Franklin County (Selected)* and the *Washington Heritage Roster Sites in Franklin County*, to include buildings newly added to the register and roster since the last Comprehensive Plan Update.

Grant Program

- Proposed new language detailing the Historic Preservation Grant Program, established in 2025 by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners. The program is funded by fees received from document recording per RCW 36.22.170.

Cultural Resource Review

- Outlined requirements for project review of cultural resources, which pertains to projects which use either state operating or capital funding and/or when federal funds are involved, or a project is on Federal or Tribal land.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Volume A of the Natural Environment Element includes consolidated goals and policies addressing the recognition and protection of natural areas, shorelines, environmentally critical areas, and water resources.

Volume B of the Natural Environment Element describes the natural features and functions in Franklin County, and how environmental protection and stewardship may occur.

GMA Requirements

The GMA sets out many requirements which are addressed in this element such as:

- Provisions for protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater used for public water supplies. *RCW 36.70A.070(1); WAC 365-196-405(1)(c); and WAC 365-196-485(1)(d)*
- Policies to designate and protect critical areas including wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat protection areas, frequently flooded areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, and geologically hazardous areas. *RCW 36.70A.030(6), RCW 36.70A.172, WAC 365-190-080*

Proposed Changes

We prepared the drafts with the following revisions:

Soils

The information describing and characterizing the soils of Franklin County has been relocated to the Resource Lands sub-element to the Land Use Element.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

- Proposed additions to further describe shrub-steppe habitat, incorporating updated information from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), dated 2025. WDFW is in the process of drafting further guidance for protecting shrub steppe habitat. The County and consultant team are monitoring the situation and will incorporate any additional information necessary.
- Removed the lists of State Status for each species (endangered, threatened, etc.) potentially present in the county and replaced with a reference and link to the WDFW state-wide Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) List.

Frequently Flooded Areas

- Updated the discussion of floods that resulted in Disaster Declarations to include the December 2021 flood.

Wildfires

- Relocated information about wildfire risk and the Wildland Urban Interface to the new Climate Element as a community resiliency topic.

Environmental Stewardship and Protection

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) was adopted by reference and included as an appendix to the 2018-2038 Franklin County Comprehensive Plan. We refined the language in the Element to remove the VSP as adopted by reference and proposed removing the VSP from the appendices, per staff's preference.